

March 1, 2004

The Honorable Larry Phillips
Chair, King County Council
Room 1200
C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Phillips:

Enclosed for Council consideration is the Executive Recommended King County Comprehensive Plan 2004. This plan satisfies the requirement in the King County Code for a four-year review of the comprehensive plan and also the state requirement for the ten-year review of the Urban Growth Area. In accordance with RCW 36.70A.130, these amendments are required to be adopted by December 1, 2004.

King County has done a great job controlling sprawl since adoption of the county's first comprehensive plan under the Growth Management Act in 1994. Over the last 10 years we have reduced growth in the rural area from nearly twelve percent of the countywide total to hold steady at approximately four percent. This plan moves us forward by focusing on implementation and refinements that ensure rural areas retain their rural character while the urban areas become vibrant.

Development of the Plan and Public Involvement

This plan represents the culmination of a year-long process that began on March 1, 2003, with the submittal to the King County Council of the Executive Proposed Scope-of-Work Motion for the 2004 Comprehensive Plan Update. This motion (Motion No. 11697) was adopted by the King County Council on April 28, 2003, and is the foundation for the proposed changes in 2004. Staff from several King County departments assisted in the development of this plan including: the Department of Development and Environmental Services, the Department of Natural Resources and Parks, the Department of Transportation, Department of Community and Human Services, the Budget Office and the Business Relations and Economic Development Office.

A series of public meetings in Woodinville, Preston, east of Renton, and Enumclaw was held during spring 2003. The comments received at these meetings helped shape the Public Review Draft of the Comprehensive Plan, released on November 1, 2003. This document was the subject of another series of public meetings held throughout the county in November 2003 and January 2004. These meetings were held in Woodinville, Duvall, east of Renton, Lea Hill, Black Diamond and on Vashon Island. Presentations were also made at all King County

Unincorporated Area Councils and before the Agricultural Commission and the Rural Forestry Commission. Hundreds of citizens attended these meetings and many submitted comments on issues of concern and support. These comments enhanced the development of the Executive Recommended Plan.

The Public Review Draft was available at many libraries throughout King County and three hundred copies were distributed to citizens at the public meetings and by request. All information including policies, maps, and draft code language was available on the Department of Development and Environmental Services Website. Comments were accepted at meetings, through the mail, and via e-mail. A summary of the public involvement process and a matrix listing comments received is included with this letter for your review.

The Ten-Year Review

In accordance with the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.130) King County is required to conduct a ten-year review of the Urban Growth Area. The county is required to specifically evaluate whether or not the capacity is sufficient to accommodate forecasted population projections. King County and the cities worked for more than one year analyzing the capacity of each individual city and the unincorporated urban area and determined that there is sufficient capacity to meet expected growth at least through the year 2022. King County can expect to receive 311,000 people or approximately 157,900 new households between 2000 and 2022. The Growth Management Planning Council adopted Motion 03-1 affirming the sufficiency of the existing Urban Growth Area boundary to accommodate the 2022 projected growth. Please refer to Technical Appendix D 2004, enclosed with this letter.

The Urban Strategy

Since 1994, when King County adopted its first comprehensive plan under the GMA, more than 83,000 housing units have been built; nearly all of them in the Urban Growth Area. King County and the cities are on track to absorb the population, household and job growth forecasted through the year 2022. The strategy in the urban area is to continue this trend while paying particular attention to how our communities develop.

Promoting Public Health

Focusing development in the urban area can have a positive effect on public health by increasing opportunities for every resident to be more physically active. Housing at higher densities with a connected street and sidewalk infrastructure can promote public health by supporting public transportation and nearby services and thereby increase opportunities for walking or biking.

The Green Building Initiative

The county is working toward a model sustainable community where both the public and private sectors seek to balance urban growth with natural resource protection. The King County Green Building Initiative establishes policies to encourage and promote the use of sustainable development practices in all buildings constructed by the county and to recommend these practices for all construction, remodels and renovations.

Cottage Housing

The fastest-growing demand for housing in King County comes from single persons and other non-family households who do not need and cannot afford large housing units. The proposed plan responds to this trend by allowing cottage housing developments in the urban area. This type of development – small detached housing units clustered around a central green – has been in great demand in some of the suburban cities. Cottage housing has become a wonderful housing alternative to the large family-sized homes.

Potential Annexation Areas

The population of urban unincorporated King County was 216,000 in 2003. This population is equivalent to the size of the second largest city in this state. This remaining unincorporated urban area is primarily residential with limited amounts of commercial or retail development. These geographically separate areas make the delivery of public services very inefficient and the lack of a substantive tax base can make them costly to serve. Further, in accordance with the King County Countywide Planning Policies, cities are the appropriate providers of local services. King County is encouraging the annexation of these areas to adjacent cities.

Transportation

To comply with the mandates of the Growth Management Act, King County has developed a transportation program that facilitates growth in the urban areas and not in the rural areas.

King County developed the Transportation Concurrency Management (TCM) program to ensure that growth is directed to or restricted in the appropriate areas. To further strengthen the County's urban/rural policies, the TCM program will undergo two significant changes in this plan. The first will be a change in the methodology of measuring traffic congestion on specific roadways. Instead of evaluating the volume of traffic on, or the capacity of a roadway, the TCM program will instead look at the amount of time it takes to travel from one point to another.

Another change will be to the Level-of-Service (LOS) standard. This is the measurement of traffic flow on a particular roadway. Currently, there are three different LOS standards for the urban area and one standard for the rural area. With the proposed comprehensive plan changes, the urban and rural areas will each have one LOS standard. In the urban area the LOS standard is proposed to be E while in the rural area the LOS standard remains as B. A LOS E means a higher level of congestion will be tolerated in the urban area during the afternoon peak period of travel while in the rural area less congestion will be tolerated during that same time period. In King County and the greater Puget Sound region, other cities currently use LOS E for concurrency determinations in the urban areas.

The Rural Strategy

Growth management in King County has successfully reduced the rural share of new residential construction countywide to approximately four percent. We've halted the rapid conversion of our natural resource lands that occurred prior to GMA. Now it is time to focus on keeping the farms and forests economically viable and on offering economic development alternatives for our rural residents. There are several changes in the proposed plan designed to assist rural residents and farmers be more successful.

Resource Lands

Farmers markets located in the rural and agricultural areas will be able to sell value-added products, such as cheese, dried herbs, jams, and other products developed throughout the Puget Sound counties.

Farmers will be able to do limited processing of their own crops and agricultural products, as well as crops and products from their neighbors in other Puget Sound counties. Some of the operations we envision include cheese making, milk bottling, and small cooperative commercial kitchens for jams, jellies, and pickles. The proposal also allows for cooperative storage and refrigeration. This will allow farmers to realize more value of their products and to establish small businesses and cooperatives that will provide services to other nearby farmers.

Small Rural Businesses

The repair of small machinery and parts will also be allowed in the rural and agricultural areas. With this proposal, a rural resident can set up a small repair shop to sharpen saws or repair farm equipment. There is a significant need for these services in the rural area. They will promote successful farm operations and maintenance of forest areas.

King County finds small home businesses are ideal in the rural area and this proposal offers more support to make these cottage industries work. Homeowners who wish to operate a small home business can now add outdoor storage and parking based on the size of their lot. This is in addition to the indoor space allocated for the business.

Open Space and Natural Areas

As a regional government, King County manages a regional open space system consisting of parks, trails, natural or ecological areas and working resource lands. The King County parks system is moving toward a system focused on local services to the rural area, regional parks, and stewardship of natural resource areas. The new parks section in this plan highlights this new focus.

Water Supply and Exempt Wells

The plan proposes to limit the use of exempt wells for subdivisions in the Rural Area. Exempt wells are wells that use less than 5,000 gallons per day and are therefore, exempt from obtaining a water right from the state Department of Ecology. Each subdivision would be allowed to have one exempt well serving up to six houses. Additional wells would be allowed only if the flow from one well is not sufficient to serve six houses.

The Transfer of Development Rights Program

The Growth Management Act encourages the use of innovative, incentive-based techniques for land use management. In response, King County has effectively implemented the Public Benefit Rating System and Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Programs. Both programs voluntarily protect important resource lands. The TDR Program directs growth away from rural and resource areas. It also allows private landowners to realize an economic return on their property while maintaining it in forestry, farming, habitat or open space, in perpetuity. In addition, TDR increases housing opportunities inside the urban area where urban services and infrastructure can accommodate additional growth. This plan proposes to improve the TDR Program by streamlining the qualification process for sending site landowners.

The Land Use and Area Zoning Amendments

King County, in conjunction with the cities, has determined that there is sufficient capacity in the urban growth area to accommodate the forecasted population through 2022. Growth has been stimulated in several of King County's designated Urban Centers. Four centers in Seattle and three outside Seattle have experienced significant redevelopment with new public facilities and new residential construction. A number of smaller centers have also seen significant renewal.

This plan does not propose any major changes to the urban growth area boundary. There are nine land use and area zoning amendments that propose revisions based on changed circumstances. The proposals included:

- Adding 120 acres to the urban growth area north of Willows Road with more than fifty percent of the property designated as an urban separator.
- Reducing the Redmond Ridge development by adding 120 acres to the Rural Area.
- Adding all of Redmond's Perego Park to urban growth area.
- Adding the fourth corner of a commercial area near Cottage Lake to the Neighborhood Business designation.
- Adjusting the properties included in the East Renton urban separator.
- Adding the Enumclaw Golf Course to the urban growth area as part of King County's transfer of the park to the city of Enumclaw.
- Adjusting the boundaries of the Cougar Mountain Regional Park to increase the acreage of the park.
- Changing the designation of properties north of the city of Duvall from mining to rural residential.
- Changing the designation of a parcel north of Kirkland from industrial to urban residential (this proposal was recommended by the King County Hearing Examiner).

Site-Specific Land Use Amendments

Proposals to change the land use designations of site-specific parcels must be reviewed by the King County Hearing Examiner according to King County Code Title 20. During this plan cycle, three property owners chose to enter the Hearing Examiner review process. One of these proposals is included in the recommended land use and area zoning amendments and two are not.

Recommended for approval

- Changing the designation of a parcel north of Kirkland from industrial to urban residential. This property is in the Potential Annexation Area for Kirkland and is supported by the city's Planning Director because residential development on this site is more compatible with the planned land uses to the west.

Recommended for denial

The following two proposals were recommended for denial by the King County Hearing Examiner because each proposal involved changes to the Urban Growth Area boundary that were not consistent with adopted plans, policies, and regulations.

- The redesignation of several parcels south of Woodinville in the Sammamish Valley Agricultural Production District to urban residential.
- The redesignation of one parcel east of Renton along Petrovitsky Road from rural to urban.

Supporting Documentation

Included with this letter are the following attachments:

- Ordinance adopting the King County Comprehensive Plan 2004 and the land use and area zoning amendments
- The King County Comprehensive Plan 2004 Book 1
- Nine land use and area zoning amendments
- Technical Appendices: Capital Facilities, Housing, Transportation, and the Urban Growth Area
- The King County Code Amendments: Titles 13, 14, 19A, and 21A Book 2
- RP-307 and RP-308 Analysis
- Area Zoning Studies
- Memo to Larry Phillips from Stafford Smith regarding site specific land use map amendment applications for review in 2004
- Public Involvement Document
- Fiscal note and regulatory note

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The determination in accordance with the State Environmental Policy Act is underway and will be completed this spring, in advance of any action by the King County Council. If you have any questions, please contact Stephanie Warden, Director, Department of Development and Environmental Services, at (206) 296-6700, or Karen Wolf, Senior Executive Policy Advisor, at (206) 296-3423.

Sincerely,

Ron Sims
King County Executive

Enclosures

cc: King County Councilmembers
 ATTN: Shelley Sutton, Policy Staff Director
 Megan Smith, Lead Staff, GMUA Committee
 Anne Noris, Clerk of the Council
Stephanie Warden, Director, Department of Development and Environmental Services
Steve Call, Director, Office of Management and Budget
Karen Wolf, Sr. Executive Policy Advisor, King County Executive Office